



إكسبو 2020
دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



Report on Dignified Storytelling Consultation #5: Displacement, Migration, and Dignified Storytelling

Facilitated by Altamont Group¹

April 14, 2021

6-8pm GST / 10am-12pm EST

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Consultation Participants & Objectives



A screen shot of Consultation #5 participants as the head into the breakout room discussions.

Over fifty people joined Dignified Storytelling Consultation #5 on April 14, 2021 for a conversation on the challenges and opportunities of telling stories in contexts of displacement and migration.² Discussions emphasized the potential for using participatory storytelling methods to help people affected by displacement to tell their own stories.

The Consultation, titled “Displacement, Migration, and Dignified Storytelling,” was the fifth of a six-part series that is being hosted by Dignified Storytelling, an initiative to build momentum and provide resources for storytelling practices that place respect for contributors at the heart of the process and end

products. The Consultations serve as one platform for storytelling professionals, including communications specialists, content creators, academics, and journalists, to connect and learn from each other.

Outcomes from Consultation #5 – along with the other discussions in the series – will help inform the *Dignified Storytelling Handbook*, which is being developed as part of the wider initiative with support from Dubai Cares, Expo 2020, and the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC).

Discussion Summary

To set the scene for the Consultation #5 discussions, Kellie Ryan (International Rescue Committee), Ingrid Guyon (Fotosynthesis), and Keeya-Lee Ayre (GSMA) provided framing remarks on storytelling with refugee and migrant populations; tips for using participatory storytelling methods; and lessons learned from a participatory storytelling project with Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in Columbia.



“To me, dignity means everyone is treated equally and with respect. This comes across in how we portray people – as complex individuals with agency and resilience.”

Kellie Ryan

Associate Director for Global Communications, IRC



“What matters in participatory storytelling is the process, not the end product. We are facilitating experiential collective learning.”

Ingrid Guyon

Founding Director, Fotosynthesis



“We started with the question: How can we best support displaced people to share their own stories, with their own creative control, and use our platforms to amplify these?”

Keeya-Lee Ayre

Senior Marketing and Communications Manager, GSMA

¹ Altamont Group is a boutique advisory firm: www.altamontgroup.ca. Special thanks to the Group Leaders for the Consultation: Kellie Ryan (International Rescue Committee), Ingrid Guyon (Fotosynthesis), and Keeya-Lee Ayre (GSMA)

² Nearly 70% of participants, who represented international development agencies, INGOs/NGOs, and freelance content creators, were attending a Dignified Storytelling Consultation for the first time.



With these introductory remarks in mind, participants joined a smaller Breakout Room discussion, where they discussed the potential and pitfalls of storytelling with people impacted by displacement and migration. Participants were asked to brainstorm their advice for storytellers who want to ensure they are keeping human dignity central amidst often difficult circumstances. Discussion points from all three groups have been summarized in the table below, concluding with the suggested guidelines.³

Discussion Question	Key Points
What is the role of storytelling in contexts of displacement or migration?	<p>Stories can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help us make sense of what has happened, including: where, why, how, and what's next. • Address fears or lack of sympathy, bringing to light the human element of every situation. • Promote a deeper understanding of the context and culture of the displaced community within the host (and global) community towards increased understanding and empathy. • Within an NGO context, build trust and understanding in the programmatic work of an organization. • Raise funds to support specific initiatives or organization. • Lead people to realize the power and importance of their own stories and provide an opportunity for reflection.
How have you seen storytelling used to promote (or to harm) social cohesion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing experiences through story can provide people with a sense of agency and control. • Stories can counter predominant narratives of displacement as a problem, providing deeper narratives and explanations – and focusing on solutions, connection, and understanding. • Stories can assist in making complex issues more accessible to the general public. • Holistic storytelling can broaden the focus from just issues of displacement to wider human narratives and interests. • Collectively sharing stories can be healing and empowering if the storyteller can choose what to tell, when and how to tell it. • Storytelling can be a means of exploring and reconstructing individual and collective identities and ideas of belonging.
What challenges are there to practicing participatory storytelling with people affected by displacement/migration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing donor and program visibility needs or requirements with the goal of elevating the agency of individuals and respect for the stories they want told. • Out of politeness or expectations that they will receive something in return, people often say what they think you want to hear, or what they <i>should</i> say. • Weighing risks and working with people to make decisions about whether or how to safely publish the story can be challenging, especially if time is limited for the ideal longer discussions and relationship-building. • There can be challenges around security, which need to be repeatedly and thoughtfully considered. • In difficult situations, people are often facing serious issues such as hunger, exhaustion, and stress that make it difficult for them to participate in storytelling processes. • Participatory processes can be challenging to facilitate when time and resources are limited. • Questions around compensation of different kinds bring up tough questions of equity and authenticity.

³ Every attempt has been made to represent the points shared with accuracy. Participants are welcome to suggest any changes by email to HQ@dignifiedstorytelling.com.



Suggested Guidelines: Storytelling with People affected by Displacement and Migration

- Spend the quality time with communities and individuals that will allow you to “make” pictures, rather than “take” pictures.
- Seek to pro-actively manage expectations of all stakeholders, being mindful of unequal power dynamics and relationships.
- Prioritize informed, time-bound consent through a process characterized by open communication, full and clear explanations, and discussions around fears and potential risks.
 - Make sure people understand where and how any quotes and images will be used, and for how long.
 - Bring the global context into the conversations about risk so that contributors have a wider understanding of potential implications of sharing their stories.
- Creatively look for ways to minimize risk in the way stories are told; for example, through the use of abstract images, not showing identifying features in images, or by using anonymous testimony.
- Train people within your organization, particularly local staff members (who are closest to the stories on the ground and understand the cultural context), in story spotting, consent, and story development.
- If working with content creators outside of your organization, seek to hire creatives from the country or locality.
- Use your voice to amplify the voices of local journalists, photographers, and videographers.
- Teach people how to tell their stories themselves, so they can work to their own timeframes and creative visions. Be open to the different stories they will tell and the different ways they want to address the issues affecting their lives.
- Recognize that sharing a story may re-trigger painful emotions and trauma for people; do everything possible to ensure there are support mechanisms available for them after telling their story.
- Always put the story within context: one testimony does not represent the whole community.
- When telling stories of individuals, do not reduce them to tropes or archetypes.
- Give people the opportunity to present themselves as they want to be presented.
 - Noting that to be truly ‘dignified’ requires wider reform to the systems of inequality and exclusion that keep people marginalized and do not allow them to truly live out their rightful human dignity.
- Allow for nuance and complications; don't present simplified narrative solutions in the face of overwhelming complexity.
- Remember there are many sides and perspectives to all stories – they can all be true. There can be a place for different types of storytelling that reveals these different ‘truths.’
- In the context of donor-facing material, avoid attribution in questions that are looking to gauge impact of interventions and don't bait interviewees into “thank you [organization]” quotes.
- Discuss within your organization (or the people you are working for) guidelines on what to do in ‘less than ideal’ situations – for example, when facing time and resource constraints – to clarify the decisions on what to prioritize.
- If working as content creator, place the needs of the community or group as first priority, above yours as an artist or those of the organization who hired you.
- Train audiences to consume deeper, more complicated stories.

The sixth and final Consultation of the series, titled “The Language of Dignified Storytelling” will be held on May 26, 2021. Consultation #6 will focus on the terminology we use to tell stories about development and humanitarian contexts. During the discussions, participants will identify problematic or overused jargon, compare language use across organizations, and suggest advice for using language that is respectful and understandable.



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Annex: Dignified Storytelling Consultation #5 Participant List

Many thanks to the following participants for their enthusiastic discussion during the breakout room discussion session:

1. Hanouf Alotaibi, UNHCR
2. Tamman Aloudat, MSF
3. Khalifa Al Suwaidi, Dubai Cares
4. Ayaz Ali, Dubai Cares
5. Keeya-Lee Ayre, GSMA
6. Sonya Armaghanyan, IOM
7. Rowen Ball, United World Schools
8. Ariel Sophia Bardi, UNFAO
9. Gareth Benest, Media Specialist
10. Anna Boyiazis, Photographer
11. Tom Bradley, Photographer
12. Victoria Bridges, Lotus Films
13. Chandra Chakma, BRAC
14. Mara Chan, The Luminos Fund
15. Mariana Chaves, Expo 2020 Dubai
16. Karen Cirillo, UNDP
17. Joanna Demarco, Photographer
18. Sandra Dixon, UK Latin Community
19. Savannah Dodd, Photography Ethics Centre
20. Constance Dykhuizen, JP's Peace Love and Happiness Foundation
21. Nina Ford, Global Fund for Children
22. Emily Franchett, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health
23. Ingrid Guyon, Fotosynthesis
24. Jodi Hilton, Jodi Hilton Photography
25. Katja Hinz, IIEP-UNESCO
26. Christian Jepsen, NRC
27. Carol Jimenez, Kusi Warma Association
28. Michael Kass, Story & Spirit
29. Florence Kim, UN Network on Migration
30. Raefah Makki, UNHCR
31. Judith Madigan, BRANDOUTLOUD
32. Shermin Mheidly, Dubai Cares
33. Nekane Ozamiz, NKProductions.org
34. Anastasiya Pak, Aflatoun International
35. Carrie Pena, buildOn
36. Sophie Pitcher, GSMA
37. Gabriella Polletta, Golletta Productions
38. Nicky Quamina-Woo, Photographer
39. Julie Sims, Room to Read
40. Lauren Pires, GSMA
41. Claudia Rosel, IOM
42. Karima Rehmani, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health
43. Kellie Ryan, IRC
44. Ragy Saro, Expo 2020 Dubai
45. John Sorek, buildOn
46. Giulia Tarantino, CESIE
47. Tara Todras-Whitehill, Visual Storyteller & Consultant
48. Quintina Valero, Quintina Valero Photography
49. Marloes van Luijk, WWF Netherlands
50. Joanna Watkins, Educate!
51. Kusuma Wijaya, ASEAN Secretariat
52. Lucy Wilson, Teach a Man to Fish

Consultation #5 was facilitated by Sajida H. Shroff and Jamie Vinson of Altamont Group (www.altamontgroup.ca) with special thanks to Keeya-Lee Ayre (GSMA), Ingrid Guyon (Fotosynthesis), and Kellie Ryan (IRC) for their support as Group Leaders.



All queries about [Dignified Storytelling](https://dignifiedstorytelling.com) can be sent to HQ@dignifiedstorytelling.com

To learn more about the initiative and sign up for future events, please visit the [Dignified Storytelling](https://dignifiedstorytelling.com) website at: www.dignifiedstorytelling.com